

Tarāwih

The holy Prophet ﷺ led the Tarāwih prayer thrice in his life. Imām Bukhārī narrates:

عن عائشة: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَرَجَ ذَاتَ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ جُوفِ اللَّيْلِ، فَصَلَّى فِي الْمَسْجِدِ، فَصَلَّى رَجُلًا بِصَلَاتِهِ، فَأَصْبَحَ النَّاسُ، فَتَحَدَّثُوا، فَاجْتَمَعَ أَكْثَرُ مِنْهُمْ، فَصَلُّوا مَعَهُ، فَأَصْبَحَ النَّاسُ، فَتَحَدَّثُوا، فَكَثُرَ أَهْلُ الْمَسْجِدِ مِنَ اللَّيْلَةِ الثَّالِثَةِ، فَخَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَصَلُّوا بِصَلَاتِهِ، فَلَمَّا كَانَتِ اللَّيْلَةُ الرَّابِعَةُ عَجَزَ الْمَسْجِدُ عَنْ أَهْلِهِ حَتَّى خَرَجَ لِصَلَاةِ الصُّبْحِ، فَلَمَّا قَضَى الْفَجْرَ أَقْبَلَ عَلَى النَّاسِ، فَتَشَهَّدَ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: «أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَإِنَّهُ لَمْ يَخَفْ عَلَى مَكَانِكُمْ، لِكَيْتِي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تُفَرِّضَ عَلَيْكُمْ، فَتَعْجِزُوا عَنْهَا» (البخاري: 924)

Narrated Aisha: Once in the middle of the night Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) went out and prayed in the mosque and some men prayed with him. The next morning the people spoke about it and so more people gathered and prayed with him (in the second night). They circulated the news in the morning, and so, on the third night the number of people increased greatly. Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) came out and they prayed behind him. On the fourth night the mosque was overwhelmed by the people till it could not accommodate them. Allah's Apostle came out only for the Fajr prayer and when he finished the prayer, he faced the people and recited "Tashah-hud" (I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is His Apostle), and then said, "Amma ba'du. Verily your presence (in the mosque at night) was not hidden from me, but I was afraid that this prayer (Prayer of Tahajjud) might be made compulsory and you might not be able to carry it out." (Bukhārī 924, Easy Qurān 881)

*[For Ameen: Long back in one of our conversations, I had said that Imām Bukhārī's style is such that he writes a chapter name in which he mentions the ruling he has derived. After that he mentions some sahih hadiths for corroboration of his opinion. This naturally means that Imām Bukhārī's main intention cannot be collecting all sahih hadiths. Another upshot is that at times, the chapter name and the hadith(s) under it appear to have little or no relation. Sometimes, the hadiths **appear** to be completely irrelevant to the chapter, but of course there is usually some relevance. But the association between the chapter name and the hadith(s) may be very fine and subtle. An example is the hadith above. Can you guess what chapter should this hadith come under?*

I found it under the chapter "بَابُ مَنْ قَالَ فِي الْخُطْبَةِ بَعْدَ الشَّاءِ: أَمَّا بَعْدُ" meaning "Chapter: Saying Ammaa Ba'd after Allāh's glorification in a sermon". Ammaa Ba'd means 'after this'. It is just an Arabic idiom, not of much relevance to people not knowing Arabic.]

In the days of Hazrat Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ's khilafah and the early days of Hazrat Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ's khilafah, people used to perform Tarāwih Salāh individually or in separate, small congregations. Then Hazrat Umar gathered them behind one Imām, Hazrat Ubai Ibn Ka'b.

عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْقَارِيِّ أَنَّهُ قَالَ خَرَجْتُ مَعَ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ فِي رَمَضَانَ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَإِذَا النَّاسُ أَوْزَاعٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ يُصَلِّي الرَّجُلُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَيُصَلِّي الرَّجُلُ فَيُصَلِّي بِصَلَاتِهِ الرَّهْطُ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأُرَانِي لَوْ جَمَعْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ عَلَى قَارِيٍّ وَاحِدٍ لَكَانَ أَمَثَلُ فَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى أَبِي بَكْرٍ قَالَ ثُمَّ خَرَجْتُ مَعَهُ لَيْلَةً أُخْرَى وَالنَّاسُ يُصَلُّونَ بِصَلَاةِ قَارِيهِمْ فَقَالَ يَغْمَثُ الْبِدْعَةُ هَذِهِ وَالَّتِي يَنَامُونَ عَنْهَا أَفْضَلُ مِنَ الَّتِي يَقُومُونَ بِهَا أَيْزِلُ النَّاسُ يَقُومُونَ أَوَّلَهُ. (موطا مالك 114/1)

Abdur Rahman bin Abdul Qari narrates that I along with Caliph Umar Bin Khattab went out to the mosque in Ramazän. There we found the people in separate groups. A person would be performing Taräwih alone, another would be leading the Taräwih for a small group of people. Hazrat Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: “By Alläh! I feel that if I gather all these people behind a single Imäm, it would be much better.” So Umar gathered them behind Ubai bin Ka’b رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ.

Abdur Rahman says: I went out with him on another night and found the people performing Taräwih behind a single Imäm. Hazrat Umar said: “What a good innovation it is!” ...

(Malik 1/114)

When the Taräwih was performed in the days of the holy Prophet ﷺ, it was behind a single Imäm, the Prophet ﷺ himself. Based on that, Hazrat Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ gathered the people behind one Imäm. And all the great and learned sahabah concurred.

From the above, it is clear that Taräwih is a Sunnah. Holy Prophet ﷺ did not continue with it for fear that it might become compulsory. When that fear was over with the death of the holy Prophet ﷺ, sahabah started performing it with much zeal and enthusiasm. Thus, Taräwih is a sunnah, the importance of which is evident from the following hadith:

فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

If a person feels uninterested in my sunnah, he is not among us (Muslims). (Bukhärî 5063)

Taräwih: 20 or 8?

عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ رُومَانَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ كَانَ النَّاسُ يَقُومُونَ فِي رَمَانَ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ فِي رَمَضَانَ بِثَلَاثٍ وَعِشْرِينَ رُكْعَةً.

Yazeed Bin Rooman said: People used to perform Saläh consisting of 23 units in Ramazän in the days of Umar Bin Khattab رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. (Malik 1/115)

Note: 23 units: 20 units of Taräwih + 3 units of Witr

وَرَوَى مَالِكٌ مِنْ طَرِيقِ يَزِيدَ بْنِ خُصَيْفَةَ عَنِ السَّائِبِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ عِشْرِينَ رُكْعَةً

Imäm Malik narrates from Yazeed bin Khusaifah who quotes As Saib Bin Yazeed as mentioning 20 Saläh-units. (Fathul Bari by Ibn Hajar: 4/253)

Hafiz Ibn Hajar, the great commentator and scholar of hadith has accepted this hadith. Imäm Shaukani has also reported this hadith. All the narrators of this hadith are reliable and trustworthy. Imäm Bukhärî has also reported hadiths from these narrators like in hadith no. 2323 of Sahih Bukhärî.

حدثنا حميد بن عبد الرحمن، عن حسن، عن عبد العزيز بن رفيع قال: «كان أبي بن كعب يصلي بالناس في رمضان بالمدينة عشرين ركعة، ويوتر بثلاث»

Ubai Bin Ka'b used to lead the Salāh consisting of 20 Salāh-units in Ramazān at Madihah. He would lead the Witr Salāh consisting of 3 Salāh-units. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaibah 7684)

The holy Prophet ﷺ also performed Tahajjud throughout the year which was usually 8 Salāh-units.

مَا كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَزِيدُ فِي رَمَضَانَ وَلَا فِي غَيْرِهِ عَلَى إِحْدَى عَشْرَةِ رَكْعَةٍ

Allah's Apostle never exceeded eleven Rakat: neither in Ramadan nor in other months. (Bukhārī 1147)

Hadiths like the above are related to Tahajjud which the holy Prophet ﷺ used to perform in all months of the year. Same is the case with the other hadiths of 8 Salāh-units.

~~The holy Prophet ﷺ used to offer Tahajjud all his life and a large number of its merits have been mentioned in hadiths, so Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ felt that the people who missed this and slept to perform Tahajjud with full awakeness were better. However, such people were very few in number. Most of them would perform both. Performing the long Tarāwīh Salāh might reduce their concentration and motivation during Tahajjud but still their Salāh was much better than any of ours. In case of a difference of opinion among the sahabah such as in this issue, we should follow those sahabah who were close to the holy Prophet ﷺ and spent a large part of their lives in his service. And such sahabah mostly performed Tarāwīh.~~